

CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

28 JANUARY 2020

Present: Councillor Merry(Chairperson)
Councillors Bowden, Hinchey, Hopkins, Jenkins, Lent and Lister

Officers Present: Sheila Davies (OM, Legal - Community)

Advisors Present: Claire Marchant (Director, Social Services), Deborah Driffield
(Assistant Director, Children's Services) Rose Whittle and Gillian James

104 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received for this meeting.

105 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct

106 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 September and 18 November were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

107 : OUT OF AREA PLACEMENTS BRIEFING/UPDATE

The Chair welcomed Kate Hustler, Operational Manager, Substitute Family Care to the meeting.

Members were provided with a presentation outlining the current position relating to placements as at 21 January 2020. The presentation outlined the themes for placements, the location of placements based on type (residential, kinship care, in house foster carers and Independent Fostering Agencies), Issues, work in progress with in house residential progress and the next steps.

The Committee were invited to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the information received.

- Members queried how the authority kept in touch with those children resident further afield and were advised that Social Workers undertake visits and reviews. Members were advised that the IRO would always have an oversight. They are also offered advocacy. It is also hoped to increase independent visits.
- Members queried whether all care was regulated wherever the children were placed. Members were advised that the last time that any form of unregulated care was used was in Christmas 2018.

- Members referred to occasion when the specific needs of the child meant they were placed out of the area and asked whether there was a clear understand of what drives that. Members were advised that it usually relates to siblings, sometimes it is difficult to place larger families, there are also occasions when it is in the best interest of the siblings. Usually siblings can be placed together if it is in-house, it is more difficult in residential care. An assessment is always carried out to identify whether it is in the best interest to stay together.
- Members welcomed the update in relation to the work underway to develop an in house assessment unit and were advised that there will be consultation with Members and there will be due diligence carried out in relation to the area.

108 : CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY CONSULTATION UPDATE

Members were provided a presentation updating the position in relation to the Corporate Parenting Strategy Consultation. Members noted the current timescales:

- February – Consultations complete, stakeholder sessions and literature review;
- March – Strategy writing and co-production group sessions
- April – CMT and CPAC Draft Strategy
- May – Scrutiny and Cabinet
- May – Launch of the Strategy

The Committee were invited to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the information received.

- Members felt that Kingship carers and organisations needed a voice particularly as they have been traditionally under represented.
- Members felt that the timescale was optimistic.

109 : VOICES FROM CARE PRESENTATION

The Chair welcomed Chris Dunn, Programmes Manager, Voices from Care Cymru to the meeting who provided Members with a presentation.

That presentation outlined provided Members with some general introductory information about the project; the values and key initiatives; the importance to young people of emotional and mental health, of sibling relationships; of being loved; and of stability and breaking the stigma that young people in care cannot do things that others can.

The Committee were invited to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the information received.

- Members discussed funding and whether enough was being received. Members noted that no statutory services are provided which makes a difference in the position with funding. Funding has also been cut centrally however, working is ongoing with charitable trust to try and ease the funding burden. The lack of funding has mean that projects have had to be halted.
- Members were concerned to know what they could do to help and were advised that it was important to have conversations about the responsibilities of corporate parents and raising an awareness of the voices from care; if there are activities and initiatives taking place young people would welcome the attendance of corporate parents; be champions for care experienced young people; question what the Council and partners are doing to support young people – for example Welsh Government are about to take on 6 care leavers in Cathays Park. The Council can also offer placements and traineeships.

110 : EDUCATION ITEM - PERFORMANCE OF CARDIFF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN 2018-2019 INFORMATION REPORT

Members had been provided with a Briefing report in respect of the Performance of Cardiff Looked After Children which provided analysis of the educational outcomes for the academic years of Children Looked After in years 2, 6 9 and 11. Members were advised that it was important to note, with particular reference to the Key Stage 4 information, the reporting mechanism has changed; the information provided is from a specific point in time, namely the end of March 2019 which shows that 79 young people were looked after in year 11, 27 of which were out of County.

The Committee were invited to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the information received.

- Members referenced the difference in performance of those in care and school locally as opposed to those out of county. Members were advised that emphasis is placed on bringing young people back to Cardiff as soon as possible and that the best chance for those young people is that they are attending school locally so that they have access to all the support services that can be provided.
- Members were concerned to know whether it was felt that schools were doing all that they could not to exclude children in care in the secondary sector and were advised that the school is always challenged by the team about the any proposed exclusion, but again if children are in school out of county is it is far more difficult to challenge.
- Members asked why we do not receive the same information from other local authorities in relation to those young people who are placed out of county as the information obtained from our own virtual tracker. The officer advised that whilst all Local Authorities have a tracker, our system talks to our tracker – it is the same

other authorities however, the new PEP system is helping to provide a greater amount of information.

- Members noted that the new PEP format and system of responsibility was initiated in September of 2019. It is an ongoing developmental priority but there are already improvements in the information being collated and provided.

111 : IRO REPORT

The Chairperson welcomed Matt Osbourne (Service Manager, Children's Services) to the meeting to present the Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) Monitoring Report; a report the Committee received from the IRO service twice a year.

The Committee were invited to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the information received.

- Member discussed the increase in the Looked After Children population and noted the trends identified through case audits and population analysis in particular reference to the Courts making greater use of a legal process to place children at home with a parent under Placement with Parent Regulations (PWP). Members noted that it can be difficult to evidence satisfactory progress to the Court that there has been sufficient change that would warrant changing the order. A team has been reviewing all the PWP care orders, there are about 100 cases. The review has taken longer than at first anticipated, families have often become reliant on the involvement of Social Services and they do not want that Social Service to be withdrawn. Whilst the PWP is in place, although the young person is living at home, the Local Authority has the same statutory duties as any other Looked After Child.
- Members noted that the increased level of turnover has inevitably led to drift despite the new social workers and managers doing what they can to minimise delay. The Director advised that retention and recruitment of staff is a significant priority and something that the Directorate has been struggling with. Whilst recruitment appears to be improving retention is still an issue; some of that is due to promotions elsewhere but some is due to neighbouring authorities paying more. The Cabinet Member for Children's and Families advised that finance are currently working on a package of improvements. An update can be provided in due course.
- Members discussed the Targeted and Specialist Services moving to localities in the East, West and South of the City during the course of the next week. Officers believe that it is the best overall outcome for our Looked After Children but accept that at the moment is a difficult time and that the changes and restructure have been disruptive.

- Members expressed concern that the drift has also led to reviews not being conducted on time and queried how that would be affecting our Looked After Children. The Officer advised that whilst the rising number of children has placed additional pressure on staff workloads no local authority is meeting the 100% threshold. Reviews are very rarely more than a few days out of time and if that is the case IRO's make a concerted effort to ensure as much information is available to ensure the best for the child.
- Members queried the time scales for the production of minutes/reports as a result of Looked After Reviews or Child Protection Conferences and were advised that there are no set timetables however, there is best practice. Monitoring Forms are to be completed within 5 days, the majority of which are done within that time, they are then sent to Team Managers to review. The process is being reviewed and improved regularly.

112 : CHILDREN'S SERVICES QUARTERS 1 & 2 PERFORMANCE REPORT

Members were provided with the Children's Services Quarter 1 and 2 Performance Reports in respect of Children Looked After.

RESOLVED: To note the content of the reports.

113 : CHILDREN'S SERVICES QUARTERS 1 & 2 COMPLAINTS REPORT

Members were provided with the Children's Services Quarter 1 and 2 Complaints and Representations Reports in respect of Children Looked After.

RESOLVED: To note the content of the reports.

114 : MEMBER WORK STREAMS

AGREED: To confirm the work streams, ensure all areas are covered and arrange meetings with individual members.

115 : MEMBER VISITS

RESOLVED: To note the information contained in the report.

116 : FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Assistant Director advised the development of the strategy is currently ongoing and a revised suggested work programme is to be circulated.

117 : BRIEFING PAPERS

VVC Adoption Annual Report.
Members noted the content of the Report.

118 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

No urgent items were tabled at the meeting.

119 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next scheduled meeting of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee is on Tuesday 17 March 2020 at 200 pm.

The meeting terminated at 4.50 pm